

# An Exploration into the Pedagogy of Sustainable Lifestyle

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**Abstract**—This paper is a narrative review on sustainable lifestyle. It surveys the literature and identifies key areas or themes relating to sustainable lifestyle. The research classifies various themes like agency-structure, cognitive-behavioral-empirical, and policymaking and future projections. Pedagogical sustainable models show inclusion of various elements like content and theory on sustainability with the goal of practice and behavior change.

**Keywords**—sustainable lifestyle; pedagogy; sustainability

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the reality of great climate occurrences, a new lifestyle has been espoused which is known as ‘sustainable lifestyle,’ a standard of living which aims to moderate an individual’s or society’s use of natural and personal resources. Much has been written to explain and elaborate the concept of sustainability. However, various facets relating to this lifestyle emerged and needs to be discussed. This paper explores the origins and development of sustainable lifestyle. It surveys the key areas connected to sustainability and explores the education and pedagogical approaches implemented in promoting this lifestyle. Likewise, the paper will discuss various issues which includes opportunities and challenges of this movement.

## II. METHOD

For this paper, the methodology used was a narrative review pertaining to sustainable lifestyle. It employed a qualitative approach to create an integrative or methodological review of the literature related to sustainable lifestyle [1]. The method aims to identify major findings across various studies. A general survey of the literature was conducted as to determine the scope and topics at hand.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Sustainable Lifestyle: Definition and History

Generally, a lifestyle is defined as an integrated set of practices which an individual embrace. These habits are routine practices incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and favored milieus for encountering others [2]. However, sustainable lifestyle refers to the practice of a lifestyle with the objective of reducing the use of natural

resources. Practitioners of this lifestyle persevere to reduce the size of their carbon footprint through transforming various ways of their living (e.g. transportation, food, consumption). The practices and principles of sustainable living are therefore closely related to the over-all practice of sustainable ecological development

Historically, the publication in the 1950s of Helen and Scott Nearing’s *Living the Good Life* was regarded as the genesis of the present day sustainable living movement [3]. Likewise, the popularity of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in the following decade sustained the movement [4]. At present, the sustainable lifestyle movement is part of the agenda of the United Nations. A classic study entitled “Sustainable Consumption and Production, Promoting Climate-Friendly Household Consumption Patterns” was published by the United Nations to encourage sustainable living [5].

### B. Sustainable Lifestyle, Sustainability, and Sustainable Development Goals

Closely related to sustainable lifestyle are the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. Sustainability refers to the development that satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of future generations, guaranteeing the balance between economic growth, care for the environment and social well-being. It is integral to the concept of sustainable development which includes environmental, economic, and social aspects. These pillars of sustainability ensure the protection and rational use of nature, respect for people, communities, and culture, as well as, equal distribution of economic resources.

Since the Brundtland Report in 1987, various developments have been achieved in this field. Eventually, in 2002, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that called for a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2005–2014). A review of the following materials may assist in understanding the developments during this era: *The Decade at a Glance* [6]; *The International Implementation Scheme for the Decade in Brief* [7]; *The Bonn Declaration* [8]; and the comprehensive report on *DESD Shaping the Education of Tomorrow* [9].

In 2015, the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) became the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development by the United Nations (UN) Member States, including the Philippines. The SDGs are aimed to transform the habits into a sustainable way. These goals are interconnected and address the global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice [10].

### C. Studies Relating to Sustainable Lifestyle

A review of studies reveals a number of themes that are often associated with sustainable lifestyle – from agency-structure, cognitive-behavioral-empirical, and policymaking and future projections.

1) *Agency-structure theme*: Literature relating one's lifestyle within certain beliefs or philosophies may be considered under this theme. Under this category, sustainable lifestyle is discussed either philosophical or sociological which relates the individual into societal structures. The school of critical pedagogy and adherents of ecopedagogy belong to this area. Critical lens are applied to provide context to the challenges of individuals provided by globalization [11]. Other studies argue for a contextual approach to sustainable consumption and for that purpose try to develop a conceptual model that combines a focus on the central role of human agency with proper treatment of the equally important role of social structure [12]. Some studies also explore sustainable consumption as lived by individuals from diverse cultural roots drawing insights from experience and reflection [13]. Consumers, governments, and business were identified as three main groups of actors which influence the sustainability of private consumption [14]. In relation to sustainable lifestyle, group behavior has been proven to be an effective way to promote sustainable living (e.g. recycling) [15]. The use of the anthropological gaze to the subject of 'sustainable development' by conducting a classroom ethnography and employing a critical approach among business students to become critically aware of the paradoxes of sustainable development merits the conceptual approach to the topic [16].

2) *Cognitive-behavioral-empirical theme*: A substantial number of studies relate to cognitive-behavioral-empirical theme of sustainable lifestyle. These studies give weight to understand the psychological component of living this lifestyle. Psychologist argues that people fail to live a sustainable lifestyle due to the lack of strong prosocial emotions which are essential to generate actions [17]. A couple of studies focus more on the relationship of knowledge and actions revealing gaps between environmental information and practice thus highlighting that consumers' rationality is not enough to produce a change in behavior. Likewise, even well-informed, most consumers pay little attention to ethical considerations in their decision-making behavior [19]. Motivational psychology argues that empowerment, at the individual level, can be achieved by developing a sense of competence and self-determination. Other studies conducted has revealed how consumer knowledge can represent a source of dilemmas, tensions and paralyzes in the daily dynamics of

endeavoring to consume sustainably. Consumer knowledge becomes a source of dilemma reflected in the cognitive doubts exhibited by consumers when presented which alternatives represent the best sustainable path to take [20]. Also external conditions constraining lifestyle changes include cultural meanings and norms, infrastructures and available alternatives. Likewise, individual level constraining lifestyle changes involves limited time and financial resources, limited cognitive capacity, limited energy for volition and self-control, limited knowledge about problems and solutions, limited skills and task-specific knowledge [21].

This theme focuses more on the mental and behavioral characteristics of sustainable lifestyle. Generating data from personal, subjective, and cognitive perceptions and experiential actions.

3) *Policymaking and future projections theme*: A pressing theme in sustainable lifestyle focuses on policymaking and future projections. Government intervention into sustainable lifestyle is necessary to be able to concretize programs and projects for sustainable development. However, when it comes to the implementation of laws and regulations making structural conditions more conducive to sustainable consumption "the scale of change has fallen well short of the rhetoric" [22].

However, to explore potential visions of sustainable lifestyle a research envisioning the scenarios of sustainable lifestyles in 2050 was done which yielded four scenarios - *Singular Super Champions, Governing the Commons, Local Loops and Empathetic Communities* [23]. Propagating sustainable lifestyles is a complex process which includes all facets of society, including conceptual/theoretical scientific knowledge and practical implementation skills. To further the fulfillment of this aspiration, it has been studied that group behavior has been proven to be an effective way to promote sustainable living (e.g. recycling) [24].

This theme on policymaking and future visions aim to give preference to societal actions by governments, institutions, and organizations. Invoking the need to act in response to the effects of global warming and climate change, policymakers point the urgency of climate action.

## IV. PEDAGOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Education and pedagogies should be created to make economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability compatible and attainable in the subsequent years [25]. Teachers, as curriculum gatekeepers, are key to the necessary change but gaps remain wide between several factors (i.e. policymaking and implementation, teacher education and the classroom). The mobilization of educational systems to the environmental problems of the world gave rise to the concept of 'education for sustainability' [26].

Various pedagogical models have been developed to integrate education and sustainable. The most prescribed definition is from UNESCO which is "ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It

achieves its purpose by transforming society” [27]. A model of six characteristics of sustainable changes in schools was recognized to describe sustainable development in schools. These characteristics are: depth, endurance, justice, diversity, conservation, and capital which served as indicators to the attainment of sustainability [28].

Some literature would focus on comparing the paradigms of the academic world from the ecovillages while highlighting living laboratories and innovative campuses [29]. One example is the development of ecovillages and the wheel of sustainability, a holistic approach containing four dimensions: Ecological, Social, Economic and Worldview (the cultural and spiritual aspect). This model is part of the curriculum of the Ecovillage Design Education, a living and learning education developed by Gaia Education (Gaia Education) which is recognized and approved by UNESCO and UNITAR and is a part of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

Another model of Sustainability Pedagogy was developed, incorporating transformative learning, to address the need for a practical way to effectively teach sustainability which is also rooted in ecological principles. The central focus is transformative learning through ecological design. This model takes an *integrated approach* to examining complex issues by incorporating systemic and interdisciplinary learning, multiple perspectives, an active and engaged learning process, and attention to place-based learning [30].

The challenges and opportunities in developing and practicing a pedagogical model for sustainable lifestyle are varied. Many of the obstacles confronting humanity, such as climate change, water scarcity, inequality and hunger, can be given solutions at a global level by propagating sustainable development. A major challenge in implementing sustainable lifestyle is the enlightenment of people on the real threat of climate change and limiting the influence of climate change deniers. Likewise, conflicting market systems such as socialism, capitalism, and globalization, together with their advantages and consequences or effects should be made known to the public. Moreover, within our educational system, a change in the current philosophy should be accepted. School subjects remain to be academic when real world problems are real and pragmatic. Grades should be secondary as basis for achievement and concrete actions and contribution to promote sustainable development and lifestyle should be highlighted. The praxis of pedagogical sustainable lifestyle is only achievable if the required conditions of understanding and practice are met.

## V. CONCLUSION

Exploring pedagogy on sustainable lifestyle shows the magnitude and scope of perspectives and priorities. The micro-level indicates a change in behavior, attitude, and habits. Though considerations should also be made in relation to cognitive processes, motivation, and rationality. These individual factors affect one’s consumption and lifestyle. Aside from individual actions, socio-cultural structures play an important role in determining possible pedagogical approaches to lifestyle. Lifestyles are often link with consumption and

studies argue that consumers do not have complete freedom to choose the lifestyle they want, including a sustainable lifestyle [31]. Thus, the structural considerations should be well-taken into account like motivation of citizens by empowering consumer policy could convince consumers to make specific changes in their lifestyles.

Schools are becoming more conscious with the dangers of environmental change thus pedagogues are encouraging the development of sustainable models to create the desired lifestyle. Sustainable Lifestyle models are often results of organization proposals. Pedagogical components often included are content and practice. Hence, achieving praxis in the implementation of models is a common goal. No pedagogical sustainable lifestyle model may provide all necessary components but with continuous consideration of all the factors affecting human lifestyle, the best model is yet to be implemented.

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